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Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Initial report submitted by Bangladesh under article 35 of the Convention, due in 2010*

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorders
CAT	Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence against Women
CNAC	Center for Neuro-development and Autism in Children
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRMW	Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DSS	Department of Social Services
DWA	Disability Welfare Act, 2001
ERCPH	Education and Rehabilitation Center for the Physically handicapped
GAPH	Global Autism Public Health Initiative
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
HPNSDP	Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Development Plan
HR	Human Rights
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IGA	Income Generation Activities
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPNA	Institute for Pediatric Neuro-disorders and Autism
JPUF	Jatiyo Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
NDD	Neuro Developmental Disability
NFDDP	National Foundation for Development of the Disabled People
NFOWD	National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled
NSDC	National Skills Development Council
NSSS	National Social Security Strategy
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
OP	Optional Protocol
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RPPDA	Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013
RTI	Right to Information Act
SAAN	South Asia Autism Network

SEARO	South East Asia Regional Office
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

I. The Common Core Document

Location and Geography

1. Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign country in 1971 following a nine-month war of liberation. It is one of the largest deltas of the world with a total area of 147,570 sq km, bordered on the west, north, and east by India, on the southeast by Myanmar, and on the south by the Bay of Bengal.

2. The country consists of low, flat and fertile land, except the hilly regions in the Northeast and the Southeast, some areas of highland in the North and North Western part. Bangladesh is covered with a network of rivers and canals forming a maze of inter-connecting channels. The major rivers, Padma, Meghna, Jamuna, Teesta, Brahmaputra, Surma and Karnaphuli covering the country, flow down to the Bay of Bengal and heavy silts deposited by the rivers during the rainy season and thus continuously enriching the alluvial soil.

Demography

3. The total population of Bangladesh stood at 150.2 million (census 2011) with a population density of 1,015 per square kilometer. The total child population in 2012 stood at around 510 million of which 302 million are boys and 208 million are girls. There are approximately 33.03 million households in the country and average household size is 4.4. Of the total population, 74.98 millions are male and 74.79 million are female, which yields a sex ratio of 100.3 indicating almost equal numbers of men and women in the country. The average annual population growth rate is 1.37%. Approximately 83 percent of the population is Muslim, 16 percent is Hindu and 1 percent is Buddhist, Christian or other (BBS Population Census, 2011).

Economy

4. Historically Bangladesh is an agrarian economy. Although the share of agriculture to GDP (15.33%) has been decreasing over the last few years, yet it dominates the economy accommodating major rural labor force. Bangladesh follows a mixed economy that operates on free market principles. The principal industries of the country include readymade garments, textiles, chemical fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, tea processing, sugar, leather goods etc. The principal minerals include natural gas, coal, white clay, glass sand etc. Remittance plays a major role in reducing poverty and increasing economic growth by driving consumer spending. Remittance inflows have more than doubled in the last five years under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

5. Bangladesh has made significant economic progress over the last ten years. In fiscal year 2015–16, the GDP growth rate of Bangladesh was 7.05% and currently per capita income is US$ 1,466. Annual economic growth has averaged over 6% since last decades and incomes have doubled in less than thirty years. Real per capita income has increased by more than 130 percent and the poverty rate has declined by almost half in 2015 compared to 2005 when the rate was respectively 24.8% and 40.4%. In fact Bangladesh has achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) well ahead of time (Bangladesh Economic Review 2016).

6. Bangladesh's development experience is particularly remarkable in a sense that it stands out as a positive example of a resilient young nation that has fought many natural disasters as well as internal political conflicts and yet stayed firm on the development path. Per capita income has been raised continuously and steady progress has been made in reducing poverty. Despite the progress in economic growth, poverty is the single most important socio-economic policy challenge for Bangladesh.

7. The economic and development policy of the country is governed by Vision 2021. The Vision 2021 and the associated Long Term Perspective Plan 2010–2021 have set solid

development targets for Bangladesh to be achieved by the end of 2021. Bangladesh has already achieved the lower middle-income status in 2015. Along with higher per capita income, Vision 2021 lays down a development scenario where citizens will have a higher standard of living, better education, better social justice, more equitable socio-economic environment and the sustainability of development will be ensured.

Legal and administrative framework

8. Bangladesh has a parliamentary system of government. The National Parliament has 300 seats elected by popular vote from single territorial constituencies. In addition 50 seats are reserved for women. Elected members serve for a period of five years.

9. The President appoints as Prime Minister a Member of Parliament who appears to him to command the support of the majority of the members of parliament. The President is the Head of State and the Prime Minister is the Executive Head of Government. The Cabinet Ministers are selected by the Prime Minister. The President acts in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister. The executive power is exercised by the Prime Minister.

10. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh is the highest Court in the country and comprises the Appellate Division and the High Court Division. The Supreme Court consists of the Chief Justice and the Judges of the Appellate Division and the High Court Division.

11. From the administrative point of view, Bangladesh is divided into 8 Divisions, 64 Districts, 11 City Corporations, 320 Municipalities, 489 Upazillas and 4550 Unions.

Social and cultural structure

12. Bangladeshis is a democratic, secular and socialist state. The identity of Bangladesh is rooted in a Bengali culture that transcends international borders.

13. Bangladesh has a rich history and culture. The land, the rivers, and the lives of the Bengali people form a rich heritage. It has evolved over the centuries and encompasses the cultural diversity of several social groups of Bangladesh. The Bengali Renaissance of the 19th and 20th centuries noted Bengali writers, authors, scientists, researchers, thinkers, music composers, painters and film makers have played a significant role in the development of Bengali culture.

Legal basis of CRPD

14. The State is governed by the National Constitution (1972) which is based on the principles of equality, human dignity and social justice for all citizens, as declared in the "Proclamation of Independence of Bangladesh". The Constitution mandates equality, non-discrimination and also creates room for equitable measures to ensure that all backward sections of the population interact with all, on an equal basis with others. This had formed the basis for all human rights instruments of the country, including its laws and policies, and also allows the State to accede to all such international human rights treaties and instruments.

15. In 2009, the Government has constituted an independent National Human Rights Commission, which is entrusted with the responsibility to act as a watchdog for monitoring the rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens, especially those who are most vulnerable. Up until a separate Disability Rights Commission is up and running, it is this Commission that will ensure the rights and privileges of persons with disabilities in the country, on an equal basis with others.

II. The Preparation of the Report

16. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) entered into force on 3rd May 2008. However, during that time, Bangladesh was going through a phase of political transition under the governance of temporary caretaker government. In December 2008, the general election was held and the Grand Alliance led by Bangladesh Awami League won the 9th Parliamentary Elections through a landslide victory, and came

into office in the first week of January 2009. The rights and fundamental freedoms of people with disabilities featured in the election manifesto (Article 10.6) of the Awami League which also proclaimed that the necessary legislation would be updated according to the needs of the times, i.e., in the spirit of the CRPD. Within a month of assuming responsibility of Government, it constituted a committee including representatives from people with disabilities to amend the Disability Welfare Act 2001. At the same time, the National Monitoring Committee (the committee for monitoring the implementation of the CRPD in Bangladesh) was also restructured and further strengthened. Under the auspices of the monitoring committee, the Government of Bangladesh established another committee to prepare this report for submission to the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR). Like other previous committees, this committee too included representatives of organizations working with persons with disabilities.

17. The National Monitoring Committee while drafting the report held extensive consultations with each and every Ministry of the Government to gather information on the actions taken so far towards implementation of the CRPD. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was specifically tasked to oversee the compilation of this report. This draft has been shared with different stakeholder groups, especially people with disabilities and their organizations. It has also been made available on the website of the Ministry of Social Welfare (the lead Ministry on Disability related affairs) for public comments/suggestions and a good number of comments relevant to the report were incorporated.

18. Care has been taken to ensure that information contained in this report concerns people with all types and grades of disabilities, and considers issues of gender, age, ethnicity and also geographical diversity.

19. With regard to the medium of consultations, Bangla has been used as that is the principal language for the people in Bangladesh. The people of disabilities particularly preferred Bangla as English is barely spoken by them.

20. Unlike most countries which attune their concerned laws prior to acceding to a human rights treaty, Bangladesh first ratified the CRPD, and then ensued the process for attuning its laws and policies. The disability legislation has been enacted in Bangladesh following the principles, spirit and content of the CRPD. National policies and action plans are yet to be attuned. Therefore, progress of implementation of the CRPD will not be reflected much in this Initial Report. It is expected that the subsequent reports four years from now and thereafter will reflect much more positive change in that direction.

III. The Treaty-specific Document

Policy and Legislation

21. Bangladesh is governed by a written constitution, which is based on the principles of equality, human dignity and social justice for all its citizens without any discrimination whatsoever. Therefore, the Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh never steps back from voicing its support to an international treaty, which is based on the principles of human rights and non-discrimination. However, since it is striving to become a middle income country and is constrained by an enormous population and frequent major natural disasters, it cannot always maintain required pace in the implementation of such treaties, particularly at the speed it cherishes. Therefore, the limitation of resources is always taken into consideration while Bangladesh becomes a party to any human rights treaty.

22. The Policy of Bangladesh is to attune its legal and policy framework after accession/ ratification of a particular treaty which is followed by gradual steps towards its effective implementation. The second step in the process involves amending and/or updating the relevant municipal laws in the spirit of the treaty. The relevant policies are amended in line with the revised laws which include adoption of long term action plan. The plan provides guidelines for actions in the short-term, medium term and long-term. National budgets are allocated accordingly. Simultaneously, other laws and policies are gradually amended in the spirit of the concerned treaty, though it takes time, to ensure that the entire legislative

framework adheres to the spirit of the treaty. The treaty-specific legislations generally enjoy supremacy over other legislations in the case of any conflicts.

23. However, the law of the country also allows immediate action, if needed even before the legislation is enacted or amended. Such actions are later validated by prescribed legal procedure. Example of such practice could be found in the implementation of this very Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

24. Bangladesh ratified the CRPD as the eighth country hoping that the CRPD could enter into force at an earliest possible time. During the ratification, the country was being governed by an un-elected caretaker government, without a Parliament in place. So it refrained from amending its legislation, although initiated a process towards that end. A team was formed to legally analyze the existing legislation with the CRPD, and to suggest how the legislation needs to change. Also focal points were nominated in each relevant Ministries and Departments of the Government. The focal points received basic training and orientations on the CRPD and the rights of persons with disabilities.

25. Immediately after the 9th Parliamentary Election in 2008, when the democratically elected Government took office, a high level committee was constituted to draft the amended legislation in the spirit of the CRPD. A national network of NGOs working with the people with disabilities was assigned with the responsibility of drafting the law on rights of persons with disabilities. The legislative drafting procedure was guided by opinions from stakeholders.

26. Having gone through a series of consultations with over 14,000 people, including people with disabilities, caregivers, family members, professionals in the field, lawyers, doctors, journalists, teachers, students, businessmen, politicians, government officials, local government representatives, members of parliament etc., the draft was finalized. The national consultation was also attended by women and children with disabilities. Separate consultation was organized for the user of sign language. Similarly, those with autism, intellectual disabilities and mental illnesses, along with their parents and caregivers participated in the process. Braille and soft copies were also made available at different stages of the draft to ensure effective participation of people with visual disabilities. After all these, the draft legislation was finalized. Therefore, it could be safely claimed that, this law is by far the most widely consulted legislation in the history of Bangladesh.

27. The draft was published on the website of the Ministry of Social Welfare of the Government, inviting further opinion from the general public. Having incorporated the relevant opinions, the draft was circulated to all ministries. It was approved at a meeting of the Cabinet and forwarded to the National Parliament. The Parliamentary Standing Committee reviewed the entire draft, before it was finally placed in the Parliament in the form of a Bill for enactment.

28. The bill was unanimously passed in the Parliament on 3rd October, 2013. The President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh approved the enactment, and on 9th October, 2013 the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013 was published through gazette notification. This new legislation has opened a new era in the establishment of rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities in Bangladesh.

29. In order to put an end to practice of discrimination in the society particularly on the basis of liability, the Law Commission of Bangladesh has finalized an Anti-discrimination Bill, 2015 which is under active consideration of the government.

Monitoring Mechanism

30. According to the Allocation of Business of the Government of Bangladesh, the Ministry of Social Welfare is entrusted with the responsibility of dealing with development of persons with disabilities. As such, under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Welfare, a high powered National Monitoring Committee has been constituted, comprising of representatives from other ministries and representatives of organizations of people with disabilities.

31. As many as 46 Ministries and Departments are represented in the National Monitoring Committee through their focal points (not below the rank of a Joint Secretary). Other members of the Committee include representatives from leading human rights, women's rights, education rights and legal rights organizations. The Commissioner of the National Human Rights Commission, chief functionaries of Transparency International and the Chamber of Commerce and Industries are also included in the Monitoring Committee.

32. The committee convenes on a quarterly basis to review and discuss on the progress of work by the different ministries and stakeholders towards the implementation of the CRPD.

33. In addition, on behalf of the vibrant civil society in Bangladesh, a notable Disability Rights Watch Group, consisting of eminent members of the civil society plays a very proactive role to watch any occurrences of human rights violations of persons with disabilities, and act accordingly.

34. A Parliamentarians' Caucus on Disability is also working for the protection of rights of the people with disabilities. Chaired by Advocate Abdul Matin Khasru, an eminent Member of the Parliament as well as former Minister for Law, this Caucus of 20 parliamentarians keeps a vigilant eye on the affairs conducted by the State concerning people with disabilities. The caucus also ensures that the disability rights issues are discussed during the Parliamentary sessions.

35. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013 prescribes the formation of committees at different levels to oversee its implementation, and also protect the rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities, as described in the law. At the national level, two inter-ministerial bodies — National Coordination Committee (NCC), headed by the Minister of the Ministry of Social Welfare and the National Executive Committee (NEC) is headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare are functioning under this provision.

36. There are also committees at the District and Upazilla levels, headed by respective administrative heads. In order to decentralize the decision-making process, Urban Committees have also been constituted at large cities/municipal areas. All these committees are inclusive of persons with disabilities and their representatives. Care has been taken to ensure that women are specifically included in all committees, from national to grassroots level. People's representatives have also been included in all these committees.

37. According to the law, these committees will be the first port of call for persons with disabilities in case of violation of any rights. This however does not prevent them from pursuing a legal course of action, if they deem it necessary.

Incorporation and direct applicability of each right protected by the Convention

38. The name of the Act addressed every single right contained in the CRPD, translated into the context and social fabric of Bangladesh. Updates on the progress will be an integral part of the subsequent periodic reports four years from now and in every report thereafter.

Statistical Data

39. Up until now, there is no official national statistics in Bangladesh on persons with disabilities. The Department of Social Services is conducting a nation-wide survey to identify persons with disabilities. This survey will give the Government of Bangladesh a detailed statistics of persons with disabilities, disaggregated by type and grade of disability, age, gender, educational and economic status, ethnic origin and urban/rural strata.

The Optional Protocol

40. Bangladesh was the 16th UN Member State to ratify the Optional Protocol of the CRPD. In doing so, it has also duly recognized the competence of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of persons with disabilities in Bangladesh. However, as far as information is available, there have so far been no instances, where a citizen of Bangladesh needed to

approach the Committee on an issue that had not been resolved within the laws or provisions in Bangladesh.

41. Bangladesh nominated representative contested in the elections for the First Committee in 2008, and was elected for a four-year term during 2009–2012.

Part A
Segment of the treaty-specific document relating to the general provisions of the Convention

Articles 1 to 4 of the Convention

42. Even though the previous legislation on disability (the Disability Welfare Act) was enacted in 2001, it was drafted earlier during the mid to late 90's, when the overall understanding of Disability and its classifications prevalent in the country was more of a medical model, rather than a social model. The legislation therefore had reflection of such model. After the ratification of CRPD, there was a shift in the approach. Bangladesh made no reservation while ratifying the Convention and thus is pledge-bound to adhere to the content and spirit of the CRPD, which starts with a right-based social model in its definition and classification of disability. The new legislations thus had reflections of new understanding. In the new legislation, impairments have been classified as physical, sensory (visual, hearing and speech, and deaf blindness), intellectual, and mental (psychosocial). The legislation specifically addresses impairments in communications, so that people with Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorders or with various other non-verbal forms of communications can be addressed effectively.

43. By the term "long term" the legislation identifies the condition of people whose impairments are either permanent or lifelong. It does not necessarily mean by birth impairments rather a person who suffers from impairment due to an accident during any time of his/her life, resulting into a permanent physical or sensory impairment. Moreover, there are many conditions of mental illnesses, which have phases of remission maintained by medication. But since these require such medication for life, even though such people often go through remission phases, they too are identified as 'long-term' conditions, and thus would benefit from the provisions of the law.

44. For a country like Bangladesh, complete compliance with certain articles (such as Article 9 — Accessibility), especially where retrofitting of buildings and infrastructure involves enormous resources, would be a long term agenda. However, to ensure access to education, employment, or other basic services, the Government is planning for provisions of person-specific "reasonable accommodation" in the short term, under the provisions of the CRPD. The experience could be similar to the learning gathered from setting up crèches for the children of lactating mothers returning from maternity leave. In the earlier days, a small space would be allocated to a mother for her child, but later on, large crèches were developed in many offices within their compounds, where many others could leave their children in professional care, allowing the mothers an opportunity to attend work.

45. The general principles and obligations of the CRPD are similar to the general and fundamental principles and directives of the National Constitution of Bangladesh. As such all laws, policies and plans enacted and/or adopted in the country are automatically attuned to these principles and obligations. The 2013 legislation is specifically attuned to the CRPD having addressed all obligatory issues.

46. All plans, programs, policies and legal frameworks concerning persons with disabilities are formulated in consultation with them (the persons with disability). For the legislation itself for instance, the stakeholder consultations were organized by the nations' network of organizations working with people with disabilities at the advice of the Government. Based on the findings of the consultations an initial draft was prepared which was later finalized by the Government. The draft was then uploaded on the website for public opinion. Necessary amendments were incorporated thereafter, before it went to the Parliament for enactment.

Part B
Segment of the Report relating to Specific Rights

Article 5
Equality and non-discrimination

47. Equality and non-discrimination is the core principle of Bangladesh's constitution. The 'Proclamation of Independence', adopted on 17 April 1971, which served as the interim Constitution after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared Bangladesh as a sovereign independent nation on 26 March 1971, stated that — this newly born nation is being declared to ensure for all of its citizens — "equality, human dignity and social justice". After a blood bathed liberation war lasting nine months, at the cost of 3 million lives and millions more being disabled in the process, Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation on 16th December 1971. The following year, the national constitution was enacted, which maintained the same principle of 'equality' and categorically proclaimed 'all citizens were equal before law'. It committed to uphold equality measures for all citizens, and suggested for proactive equitable measures to promote the backward citizens so that they could be developed on an equal basis with others. Although 'disability' was not mentioned as a specific ground for discrimination in the 1972 Constitution, by addressing the backward citizens, the Constitution created space for disability-related policy and legislation. Based on that, later the National Policy on Disability (1995), Disability Welfare Act (2001) and the National Action Plan on Disability (2006) were enacted which addressed the issue of 'discrimination' on this ground of 'disability'.

48. Following the entry into force of the CRPD, the Government of Bangladesh initiated a process to enact a new law following the principles, spirit and content of the CRPD. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 was subsequently passed by the National Parliament in October 2013. The law ensures and guarantees for persons with disabilities an equal and effective legal protection against all types of discrimination, including the provision of reasonable accommodation. It also creates obligation to develop policies and programs, including affirmative actions and measures in the spirit of CRPD. The law has taken into account the diversity of persons with disabilities based on gender, age, ethnicity, religion, caste, profession, location issues in addition to the type and grade of disability.

49. Besides, the Government of Bangladesh now considers equity and non-discrimination as the key principle for adoption of all new policies and programs. Issues concerning people with disabilities are given a high priority, especially in employment in different projects and programs financed or implemented by different ministries of the Government. A new Anti-Discrimination Law is also now in the making, and representative groups of persons with disabilities are actively involved in the process.

Article 8
Awareness-raising

50. The CRPD has been translated into Bangla, the official language of Bangladesh. Popular versions, in far simpler language with examples and explanations have also been published. A child-friendly version with stories, poems and plays has also been published to sensitize children on the issues of disabilities as well as to create awareness about their responsibilities. These are widely disseminated to ensure that the general public, especially the people with disabilities living in remote grassroot level are aware of the rights and entitlements enshrined in the CRPD. Sections from these publications are also being published in national and local daily newspapers for wider circulation.

51. The State-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) and a few private television channels have started to provide sign support in their respective news bulletins. Not only has this become beneficial to sign language users, it has also helped raise national sensitization towards the diversity issue of the persons with disabilities at large.

52. Cultural programs performed by people with disabilities, drama shows and serials, children's drama etc. have been prepared and broadcast on television channels on a regular basis, in addition to disability-specific talk shows. A nation-wide talent hunt was aired on one private channel spread over a period of five months to identify persons with disabilities with musical talent. This also helped towards sensitization of the abilities of people with disabilities.

53. The State operated media has also aired specific programs on the special abilities of people with autism tilted "Amrao Pari" (we also can) and visual impairments tiled "Andharer Alo" (light in the darkness).

54. The Government of Bangladesh had issued a postal stamp and a first day cover concerning rights of people with disabilities on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December 2008, to help raise awareness and sensitization on disability in the year the CRPD entered into force.

55. Recognizing that popular media in the past often ridiculed disability issues by portraying persons with disabilities in negative and/or hilarious roles, the new legislation has strictly prohibited such practice, recognized such portrayal as a punishable offense, and has thus prescribed specific punitive measures (including extensive fines and imprisonment).

Article 9
Accessibility

56. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013, formulated following the principles, spirit and content of the CRPD, has enforced accessibility provisions throughout the document. In Article 2 (13) 'Accessibility' has been defined as "the right of persons with disabilities to get access, opportunity and treatment on an equal basis with others in all facilities and services available to the general public, including physical infrastructure, transportation, communication, information, and information and communication technology." Article 34 of the said Act is about enforcing accessibility in public places, where public places are explained as "such public and private buildings, parks, stations, ports, terminals and roads where the public has access to." Article 32 calls for enforcing accessibility in all public transports, where public transports have been defined as "any transport on land, water or air that transports passengers in exchange for fare."

57. The National Building Code has been made inclusive of accessibility issues following internationally accepted accessibility guidelines. The Building Construction Code for the Capital City has included concepts of universal design. This is now being extended to the respective codes for other large cities. Sound assisted traffic signals have been installed in a few major road intersections of Dhaka city. This is being replicated in some other cities.

58. The Dhaka City Building Construction Rule 2008 was adopted under Building Construction Act 1952 (E.B Act II of 1953). This Rule recognized Universal Accessibility and Universal Design. In the section-2 (Definition) 'Universal Design' is defined as a design where the necessity of all persons will be considered from physical point of view. Under section-33 of the Rule a 'One Window Service Cell' is formed that is responsible for scrutiny and approval of the designs. Representative from the organizations working for persons with disabilities is a member of this Cell. Section-75 (Special provision concerning universal accessibility including persons with disabilities) of this Rule guaranteed the accessibility rights of persons with disabilities. According to this section each building has to ensure universal accessibility from parking space to lift lobby, there should be at least one accessible toilet in each floor or 5% of total toilets. Schedule 3 (Minimum standard of universal accessibility) under the Dhaka City Building Construction Rule 2008 provides a detailed description of universal accessibility. There are nine sections in this schedule to ensure accessibility of all including persons with disabilities. These are: general principles, doors, railings, stairs, ramps, lifts, washroom/toilets, parking and sitting areas.

59. The Department of Architecture, under the auspices of the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, entrusted with the responsibilities of designing all public constructions supported and/or commissioned by the Government of Bangladesh, has been instructed to include necessary provisions for ensuring accessibility of persons with disabilities in designs of all future public constructions.

60. The National Policy on Communication has been made inclusive of issues concerning persons with disabilities. The railway communication between the capital city Dhaka and the second largest city Chittagong (which is also the main commercial city of the country) is being upgraded incorporating universal design standards. In a recent measure, the government has decided to import 200 new coaches, incorporated with accessibility features, which will make our rail communication system disability-friendly.

61. The National Policy on Information Communication Technology (ICT) has been made inclusive of issues concerning persons with disabilities. The Rights to Information (RTI) Act has also been enacted ensuring concerns of persons with disabilities, especially those with visual impairments.

62. Accessibility options in different buildings of the Government are also being retrofitted to cater to and ensure easier movement of persons with disabilities.

63. All Bangladesh Missions abroad have started providing consular and other services to people with disabilities on a priority basis. Staff members at these missions have been oriented accordingly to provide services to persons with disability with least waiting time. Heads of Missions have been empowered to intervene as and when required to send mobile team to the person concerned and provide consular services to him in order to ensure access to services by a person with disability.

Article 10
Right to life

64. The legislation on disability reaffirms the State's commitment to ensure the right to life of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others. The common rural Bangladeshi society is generally based on a strong family and kinship fabric, with a fairly strong in-built support system. Therefore, even with the birth of a child with disability, there is a fairly strong family based support system to assist the newborn to survive, even where there are no or limited adequately trained personal to deal with such cases. Moreover, the national food policy has been made inclusive of persons with disabilities, in addition to number of safety net programs reaching out to poor people with disabilities. Also, the Vulnerable Group Feeding program (one of the largest safety net programs of the country), operated mostly through the Department of Women Affairs, in its operational policy, has specifically prioritized women with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities.

65. Intentional and/or planned infanticide and feticide are generally not practiced in Bangladesh; however, in the distant past there had been few instances of leaving young children with disabilities unattended. There also had been some malpractices of mutilations for the purpose of using children for begging. The situation has changed considerably over the years, with the introduction of several safety net programs and protection through enactment and implementation of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

Article 11
Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies

66. Bangladesh is geographically located at one of the world's most natural disaster prone areas, frequented by widespread and massive floods, tropical cyclones and tornadoes every year. Geologically the country is also vulnerable to earthquakes. In all such humanitarian emergencies, people with disabilities are generally one of the worst sufferers. Considering this, the National Disaster Response Plan and the Standing Orders on Disasters have all been made inclusive of persons with disabilities, where they are prioritized during all evacuation, rescue, shelter, relief and post-disaster rehabilitation schemes. In times of

any major disasters, it is generally the Government that coordinates the response plan participated jointly by the public and private sectors. The Government provides Gratuitous Relief (both cash and food grains), house building grants, corrugated iron sheets, blankets etc for disaster affected people to cope with the emergencies and the loss they had incurred due to disasters. People with disabilities are prioritized in almost all such cases, and the shelters are made accessible to the best of the abilities or the local organizers. Several hundreds of new shelters are also being built with in-built accessibility features.

67. Bangladesh is considered to be one of the worst affected countries due to global warming and climate change. The impact is also seen in the form of displacement of persons, a large section of whom are persons with disabilities. Keeping this in mind, the adaptation measures taken by the Government of Bangladesh and private sectors alike are being made inclusive of persons with disabilities.

68. Bangladesh has played an active role in the negotiations for finalization of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) which has finally been adopted on 18 March 2015 at the 3rd World Conference Sendai, Japan, to ensure that the outcome document is disability inclusive. Following adoption of the document, Bangladesh has also hosted the International Conference on Disability and Disaster Risk Management in Dhaka from 12–14 December 2015, to develop working procedures to make the framework more effective in terms of inclusion of persons with disabilities in the global disaster management arena. The Conference adopted a 'Dhaka Declaration' that provides for specific time-bound actions for implementation of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

69. Bangladesh shares international boundary with India and Myanmar. From Myanmar, there had been influx of Rohingya Muslims in regular intervals which continue even today. Although a good number of refugees have been repatriated with the help of UNHCR, more than 33,000 registered refugees and nearly 4,00,000 undocumented Myanmar nationals (UMNs) are still living in Bangladesh. While the registered refugees are taken care of by UNHCR in coordination with Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, the UMNs reside in makeshift settlements in Cox's bazaar district. Among these people, there are a large number of persons with disabilities. Those people are provided with humanitarian and other services by various international organizations (UNHCR in Refugee camps and IOM in makeshift settlements) in partnership with organizations specialized in providing services to persons with disabilities, such as Handicap International.

70. Domestically, there had been a small number of insurgent groups in the south eastern hilly areas — also known as Chittagong Hill Tracts. However, with the signing of historic peace accord between the Government and the insurgent groups in 1997, the armed violence had been brought under control in that area. In the past, there also had been instances of anti-personnel landmine explosions, leading to fresh cases of disabilities in fairly large number. In the recent past, following verdicts of International Crimes Tribunal, Bangladesh (ICT-BD) against those responsible for crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War in 1971, there had been stray of violent incidents committed by sympathizers of those criminals who used home-made Molotov cocktails, killing and maiming hundreds of innocent people on the streets. Public utility offices and transports were set on fire killing and maiming people in general. The Government has provided monetary support for treatment of most of those people injured by violence. Experts have also been flown in from abroad to treat the most complicated cases, at the initiative of the government.

Article 12
Equal recognition before the law

71. Article 27 of the National Constitution of Bangladesh affirms, "All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law." Article 19 (Equality of Opportunity) also affirms, "(1) The State shall endeavor to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens. (2) The State shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality between man and man and to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens,

and of opportunities in order to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic."

72. Article 13 (Principles of ownership) of the Constitution also affirms, "The people shall own or control the instruments and means of production and distribution, and with this end in view ownership shall assume the following forms — (1) state ownership, that is ownership by the State on behalf of the people through the creation of an efficient and dynamic nationalized public sector embracing the key sectors of the economy; (2) co-operative ownership, that is ownership by co-operatives on behalf of their members within such limits as may be prescribed by law; and (3) private ownership, that is ownership by individuals within such limits as may be prescribed by law."

73. Article 42 of the Constitution (Rights to property) further affirms "(1) Subject to any restrictions imposed by law, every citizen shall have the right to acquire, hold, transfer or otherwise dispose of property, and no property shall be compulsorily acquired, nationalized or requisitioned save by authority of law."

74. In addition, the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 has specified 20 different rights for persons with disabilities in this country, under the framework of the CRPD, which include (in Article 16) "Equal recognition before the law and equal access to justice."

Article 13
Access to Justice

75. Article 31 of Bangladesh Constitution affirms, "To enjoy the protection of the law, and to be treated in accordance with law, and only in accordance with law, is the inalienable right of every citizen, wherever he may be, and of every other person for the time being within Bangladesh, and in particular no action detrimental to the life, liberty, body, reputation or property of any person shall be taken except in accordance with law."

76. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 (in Article 16) provides for "Equal recognition before the law and equal access to justice."

77. Over the last couple of years, there have been instances where interpreters have been invited in the Court to assist the people with hearing and speech disabilities. The country is yet to have a standardized sign language. Once that is done, such practices will become an integral part of the judicial system of the country.

78. In all the 64 districts of the country, under the purview of the respective Deputy Commissioner (the administrative head of the district) a substantial fund has been created aimed at disbursing to the poorer section of the communities for covering all legal procedural costs, as and where necessary. In any cases whatsoever, people with disabilities are eligible to apply and receive those funds to cover costs for any legal and/or judicial matters.

79. All police stations across the country are gradually being made accessible to persons with disabilities. Ramps and accessible toilets are being installed as the first step. Gradually there will be provisions for people with visual and hearing/speech disabilities also. Disability related information has been included into the basic training courses of the police forces.

80. Bangladesh had enacted the Legal Aid Services Act 2000, especially keeping in mind the inability of the poor, vulnerable and backward citizens of the country, who cannot access the legal system in need, either due to their inability to cover the costs, or due to their ignorance. Persons with disabilities can approach the committees constituted under this Act for accessing legal support in their times of need. Now that the Government has enacted the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013, they will be able to secure any legal services from these committees, if their rights and privileges are violated.

81. In addition, the High Court in its judgment and directives in 2009 provided guidelines to prevent sexual harassment in workplaces and educational institutions which

also includes women with disability considering their vulnerability to sexual harassment and related crime.

Article 14
Liberty and security of the person

82. Article 32 of the Constitution affirms, "No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty, save in accordance with law." Article 33 (Safeguards as to arrest and detention) also affirms, "(1) No person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be of the grounds for such arrest, nor shall he be denied the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice."

83. Meanwhile, the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 in Article 16 (1) has declared in (a) "To live and prosper to the fullest extent" and in (k) "Protection from oppression and access to a secure and healthy environment" as inalienable rights of persons with disabilities in this country.

84. The 1912 "Lunacy Act", provides for the health system to institutionalize and treat people with mental illnesses, with or without their informed consent. In 2006, Bangladesh adopted a Mental Health Policy, Strategy and Plan as part of its effort in promoting surveillance and prevention of Non-communicable Diseases. The Ministry of Health has now taken measures to enact a new human-rights-based Mental Health Act, which is in the finalization stage. Once enacted, this law will protect people from such dehumanizing measures in the future.

Article 15
Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

85. Article 35 of the Constitution affirms, "(1) No person shall be convicted to any offence except for violation of al law in force at the time of the commission of the act charged as an offence, nor be subjected to a penalty greater than, or different from that which might have been inflicted under the law in force at the time of the commission of the offence. (2) No person shall be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once. (3) Every person accused of a criminal offence shall have the right to a speedy and public trial by an independent and impartial court or tribunal established by law. (4) No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself. (5) No person shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment. (6) Nothing in clause (3) or clause (5) shall affect the operation of any existing law which prescribes any punishment or procedure for trial."

86. In general, Bangladesh does not use human subjects in any research. As such, there are no questions of using persons with disabilities for such purposes.

Article 16
Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse

87. Article 11 of the Constitution of Bangladesh clearly suggests "The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed ...". All our laws and national policies therefore are based on this principle. Moreover, Article 31 of the Constitution also prescribes "To enjoy the protection of the law, and to be treated in accordance with law, and only in accordance with law, is the inalienable right of every citizen, wherever he may be, and of every other person for the time being within Bangladesh, and in particular no action detrimental to the life, liberty, body, reputation or property of any person shall be taken except in accordance with law." This protects all persons with disabilities equally with their non-disabled peers.

88. The Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, a National Policy on Women, and a National Policy on Children provide strong legal framework for protection from exploitation, violence and abuse in Bangladesh. These generally protect and prevent women and children with and without disability against serious cases of violence and abuse. There is also increased understanding and sensitivity in the Government machinery including the judiciary towards the causes of persons with disabilities, and a vigilant media is also ensuring that cases violence or abuse against people with disabilities do not go unreported, and remedial measures take place as early as possible. In order to address exploitation of people with disabilities, especially because of their poverty, illiteracy and ignorance the Government is increasing their opportunities to education, vocational skills and employment/income. It is also expected that the 2013 legislation will help reduce such practice.

Article 17
Protecting the integrity of the person

89. Article 32 of the Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees "No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberties save in accordance with law." Other articles mentioned earlier are also there to protect the integrity of the person. Moreover, there are several other laws enacted, such as the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000, the Acid Crime Control Act of 2002, the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010, the Pornography Control Act 2012 and the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act 2012 etc. that guarantee the personal integrity of the Bangladeshi citizen. Article 16 (1)(K) of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 specifically protects the personal integrity of persons with disabilities.

90. In general, there are hardly any cases of pregnancies arising outside of wedlock, particularly for women with disabilities. Bangladesh has made very good progress in controlling its population growth through a planned and effective country-wide family planning program. However, there is not practice of forced sterilizations.

Article 18
Liberty of movement and nationality

91. Article 36 of Bangladesh Constitution affirms, "Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the public interest, every citizen shall have the right to move freely throughout Bangladesh, to reside and settle in any place therein and to leave and re-enter Bangladesh."

92. The Government of Bangladesh has adopted a program for mandatory birth registration of all its children, which includes children with disabilities as the laws of the land concerning nationality apply equally to people with disabilities. Article 16 (1)(t) of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 mentions receiving a national identification card as a right for persons with disabilities. Article 31 later gives a detailed description on the process of registration and acquiring of the card.

Article 19
Living independently and being included in the community

93. Article 16 (1) (e) of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 specifies "To live in the society with parents or legal guardians, children and family, to marry and have families;" Article 16 (1) (g) "To participate fully and actively, depending on the nature of their disability, in social, economic and state functions;" and Article 16 (1) (n) "Receiving assistance and rehabilitation for the purpose of gaining physical, mental and technical competence enabling them to integrate with the society completely" as inalienable rights of persons with disabilities.

94. The family, including the larger kin group, constitutes powerful and determining elements in the fabric of the Bangladeshi society. So the family also plays a strong support system for any of its members, including members who have a disability. Therefore, the concept of independent living had not surfaced seriously in Bangladesh until in recent years, when the large families are gradually converting into nuclear families, and parents of children with disabilities are suddenly beginning to realize that their child might need a strong support system in their absence.

95. Generally, the practice is that the person with a disability is rehabilitated within the community. Development of independent living center is a new phenomenon.

Article 20
Personal mobility

96. Some buildings of the Government have ensured that their premises are accessible by installing wide elevators with elevator buttons located within the reach of wheelchair users. The doorways have also been made wide enough for free movement. They are now planning auxiliary services, such as hand rails or portable ramps. Ramps have also been installed in most of the buildings within the Bangladesh Secretariat, so that wheelchair users can access the elevators. Some of these buildings have also provided for reservations or prioritizations to persons with disabilities in their elevators.

97. Various railway stations have created ramps and special ticket counters for people with disabilities and have marked them prominently, such that a person upon entering the platforms can view the counters from far. Where such provisions have not yet been created for lack of space, the concerned Station Master, Booking Assistant In-charge, Conductor and Guards have been specially instructed to ensure special care of persons with disabilities.

98. Almost all express inter-city trains have two reserved seats for persons with disabilities, which are available against such reservation up to three hours prior to the planned departure time. These seats are also available to persons with disabilities on a 50% discount price.

99. Considering the plight of poor people with disabilities, a provision is already in practice where all people with visual impairments can travel free of cost in all trains (except in the intercity express trains). The Government is now planning to extend a similar service to people with other types of disabilities, and offering a rebate for the accompanying persons.

100. Seats have also been reserved in buses operated by both the State operated Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) and the private sectors. BRTC also accommodates a 50% reduction in ticket prices for people with disabilities carrying an identity card, or with obvious and visible disabilities.

101. The international airports have separate immigration desks now for wheelchair using visitors, besides personal assistance for travelers using wheelchairs.

102. A handful of institutions are producing assistive devices, including artificial limbs for decades within Bangladesh. In the recent time many organizations including corporate groups are showing interest in assistive technology to make it affordable. The Government has also taken initiatives to provide them with such services/equipments free of cost. This has positively impacted visibility of the people with disability in society and helped them have greater access to public services, including those provided by the local government.

Article 21
Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information

103. Article 39 of the Constitution affirms, "(1) Freedom or thought and conscience is guaranteed. Freedom of thought and conscience, and of speech. (2) Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of

court, defamation or incitement to an offence (a) the right of every citizen of freedom of speech and expression; and (b) freedom of the press, are guaranteed."

104. The Government has enacted the Right to Information (RTI) Act in 2009, ensuring provisions for people with different types of disabilities. This has opened a new frontier for people with disabilities, especially the educated, who have more access to information now, regarding the policies, services and programs of different ministries, departments and functionaries of the Government, and will help them take far more informed decisions about their own future plans. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 has also recognized this as a right. Moreover, for people with hearing and speech impairment, "use Bangla sign language as their first language, to the greatest extent possible" has also been made a right.

105. According to a roadmap towards achieving a "Digital Bangladesh by 2021" all ministries have launched respective websites. Unfortunately, during the designing of all these sites, accessibility of persons with visual disabilities had not been considered at the beginning. But now almost all ministries are opting for these features. Under the purview of the Office of the Prime Minister, an Access to Information (A2I) project is being operated, under which 5,000 community based information centers have been opened across the country, creating an enabling environment for people at even the most remote grassroots level to access information through internet. A process has been initiated, to install talking software to these computers, such that people with visual disabilities, along with those who do not have the ability to read, also can get access to information. Two universities are working now to develop an advanced level yet user-friendly talking software in Bangla.

Article 22
Respect for privacy

106. Article 43 of the Constitution affirms, "Every citizen shall have the right, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of the security of the State, public order, public morality or public health — (1) to be secured in his home against entry, search and seizure; and (2) to the privacy of his correspondence and other means of communication."

107. In pursuit of the Constitutional provisions and the CRPD, the Government of Bangladesh is trying to take sufficient care so that persons with disabilities are free from arbitrary interference with respect to their privacy and that their honor and reputation are protected. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 has also recognized privacy of *personal information* as a right of persons with disabilities.

Article 23
Respect for home and the family

108. As has been mentioned earlier (vide Article 19), the family plays a significant role in the upbringing of any child in Bangladesh, including for children with disabilities. The extended family takes care of the work sharing, and sometimes even cost sharing, to deal with measures required to nurture a child with a disability.

109. Generally the practices of adoption and foster parents (or foster children) are very few in our society and stringent legal provisions are in place in this regard. Considering the provision for foster family service for homeless/parentless children with autism and other Neuro-Development Disorder, a committee has been formed with experts to prepare a concept paper to introduce family foster services.

110. The laws related to marriage are equally applicable for the persons with disability — for example, child marriage and dowry are strictly prohibited and are punishable offence respectively under the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 and Dowry Prohibition Act 1980.

111. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 has declared "to live in the society with parents or legal guardians, children and family, to marry and have families" as a right, and also "Access to reasonably secure housing and rehabilitation,

especially for the persons with disabilities who are dependent on their parents or family, or where they are separated from the families, or where they have no access to such services on their own" as a right too.

Article 24
Education

112. Article 17 of the Constitution affirms, "The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of (1) establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law; (2) relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs; (3) removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law." Article 28 (3) also affirms, "No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort, or admission to any educational institution." The Compulsory Primary Education Act (2000) had been enacted keeping in mind these principles. The National Education Policy 2010 also considered these. And now a new Education Act is in its drafting process, and that too is considering inclusion of persons with disabilities in the mainstream education system.

113. In order to cater to the education needs of children with disabilities, the Government has set up five special schools for children with visual disabilities, five for those with hearing and speech disabilities, two special schools and vocational training centers for those with physical disabilities. The Government also has an integrated education program for children with visual disabilities in 64 schools across the country.

114. The Ministry of Social Welfare has already introduced Disability related Coordinated Special Education Regulation, 2009. Under this initiative, 62 special schools for children with intellectual disabilities are being operated. There are also 11 Special schools for children with Autism established in eight divisional cities in the country. At present total 9854 numbers of students are receiving education in these institutes.

115. In addition to these, plenty of non-government organizations and private institutions have created special, integrated and inclusive schools for thousands of more children with disabilities. In recent years, the Government has been providing financial assistance to many of these schools, especially those providing education to children with intellectual disabilities and autism. Since 2010, the Government has been covering all educational costs of about 60 such schools, including the full salaries of all the teachers and education related staff.

116. After the secondary education level, all students with disabilities need to pursue higher education in mainstream institutions. The Dhaka University, the highest education seat of the country has been accommodating students with visual impairments since 1969. With the assistance of donors, recently it has installed a Braille and computer section in its central library, facilitating the educational needs of such students.

117. Towards ensuring the global target of "Education for All by 2015", the Government of Bangladesh, with the support of a large number of donors, had initiated a series of programs, including the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP). Realizing the need for addressing the issue of children with disability with special care, in the second phase (PEDP II) a major component had been included to address all 'left out children', including children with disabilities through an inclusive education approach. The project had very limited success. Based on experiences of first and second phases, new measures and approaches have been adopted and included in the third phase (PEDP III), which is expected to make some positive changes by the end of the project. One such example is the declaration of a minimum 2% quota for children with disabilities in enrolment into the primary schools. Besides, both to promote employment of persons with disabilities and to inspire children with disabilities, 650 teachers with disabilities have been recruited so far in Government operated primary schools, about 70% of them are women with disabilities. Now, about 150,000 children with disabilities are enrolled in these schools, 45% of them being girls.

118. In order to promote enrollment and retention in primary education, which is free of costs for all students in any case, the Government had introduced Education Stipends for the regular attendees many years back. In addition, education had been made free for the girl children up to Class VIII, which has gradually been extended now to the higher secondary level. Inspired by the success of this measure and recognizing the additional costs that children with disabilities need to incur, a program for providing special stipends has been initiated by the Government to all students with disabilities enrolled in formal education, in different slabs (primary, secondary, higher secondary, graduation, masters). Under this scheme, children in primary education receive a monthly additional stipend amounting BDT 300 while those in the university receive BDT 1000 a month. This has given a major boost to the education of people with disabilities, and positively encouraged parents from poor families to also send their children to schools.

119. The government provides text books to all children in primary schools free of cost and all books reach children in schools on the very first day of the academic year. In 2015 alone, about 300 million books were provided free of cost to children on 1st January. In 2015 for the first time, Braille books were also provided on the first day of the academic year to a large number of students. The government is working to extend the coverage so that no child with disability is left out from this scheme.

120. Recognizing the lack of adequately trained teachers in mainstream schools for the children with disabilities, the Government is now planning a scheme to train over 50,000 teachers as part of their in-service training to cater the special needs of children with disability.

121. The Government has recently either renovated or newly constructed 10,000 schools across the country, where ramps have been installed. The plan was also to make toilets accessible to students using wheelchairs. There still remains complains since most of such toilets have been relocated outside the school building making it inaccessible by the children with disability, the toilets were finally relocated behind the school buildings as a separate structure, due attention is being paid to this matter so that the complains could be addressed.

122. In the public education system, all students need to complete the answer scripts in the public exams by their own hand writing. Students with visual impairments and physical impairments, if informed earlier, are allowed scribers. Considering the extra time required, and as a measure of reasonable accommodation, the government has decided to allow an additional 20 minutes to such students in all public examinations.

123. In a recent move, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, has launched a project to set up an Academy on Autism and Neuro-Developmental Disabilities. Under the first phase of this project, besides setting up the academy, 3,000 teachers from secondary education level will be trained to cater to the specific needs of children with Neuro-Developmental Disabilities.

124. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 has given huge importance to the area of education for persons with disabilities. Firstly, in Article 16 it has been declared as a basic right. Article 33 entirely is about "Elimination of Discrimination against Admission of Persons with Disabilities in Education Institutions". Finally a dedicated section, Section 9 (with 12 sub-sections) of the Schedule of the Law, has been kept to deal with Education and Training.

Article 25
Health

125. As Bangladesh makes progress through its health policies on its infant mortality rate, immunization coverage and general health care, we are expected to experience a lower incidence of impairments. However, the gains due to improved health care is likely to be outweighed by the triple effects of increased numbers of impaired children surviving; increased numbers of people incurring impairments due to old age (e.g. cataracts and

arthritis) and widespread malnutrition. Due to lack of consistent oxygen supply at labor rooms of many hospitals at the local level causes conditions like cerebral palsy, or intellectual disabilities of new-born children. This compounded with the natural calamities and a constant occurrence of road accidents cause rise in cases of impairments in Bangladesh. The Government is working towards ensuring proper healthcare and neonatal facilities in all local level hospitals including in the community clinics.

126. Over the last three decades or so, Bangladesh has made some progress in making clean drinking water available to even remote rural areas. With the support of large and small donor organizations millions of shallow tube wells had been made available. However, over the last decade and a half, it has been found that, due to such indiscriminate sinking of wells, a large portion of these have become contaminated with arsenic poisoning. While on the one hand, low-cost user-friendly arsenic mitigation tools and techniques are being researched, people are being advised to go back and use surface water. But in this entire scenario, ensuring supply of clean drinking water to the disabled people was not on the agenda of any of the donors. Similarly, in the area of sanitation, low-cost user-friendly sanitary (slab) latrines had been made available all over the country. But in most cases, these are not at all accessible to persons with physical disabilities, especially the ones using wheelchairs. The scenario is changing now, most noticeably following the CRPD, as donors are increasingly supporting WASH facilities with accessibility options.

127. Expatriate workers with disabilities requiring urgent medical help are sent to hospitals by the staff of the concerned Bangladesh Missions abroad. Their progress is regularly monitored and costs involved in the treatment are paid from the Welfare Fund of the concerned Missions, upon approval of the Wage Earners' Welfare Funds Board.

128. The national health policies in the past have rarely incorporated disability issues, and so the main actors in this field have mostly been the non-government organizations. However, now, prevention of blindness has been addressed, to some extent, in the national health policy. The Government is now working on a new health policy which aims at covering prevention of other types of disabilities that had not been addressed in the mainstream health movement in the past.

129. Total 32 operational plans are now running under the National Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Development Program (HPNSDP), two of which plans, and in addition, one project under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have now been approved focusing on Autism. Ministry of Health itself has established an Autism Cell to coordinate related activities. The Ministry is commissioning research on autism and NDDs, and is maintaining a registry on NDDs in all health centers across the country. Besides hosting the National Autism Academy within their Directorate premises, the ministry is also in the process of developing a training module on Autism and NDD for their Foundation Training Courses.

Article 26
Habilitation and rehabilitation

130. The Government operates one orthopedic hospital in Dhaka and one orthopedic unit at each of the medical college hospitals, as well as three leprosy hospitals. The GOB is also operating two vocational rehabilitation centers for those with orthopedic disabilities. Several private and voluntary organizations are operating orthotics and prosthetics workshops, as well as two training centers each for people with visual and intellectual disabilities.

131. The government has recognized a couple of training courses on physiotherapy and occupational therapy, and a few more private universities have come into the scenario. This is gradually creating a pool of therapists in Bangladesh. At the non-government sector, another center is developing a plethora of rehabilitation aides, and so far over 1,000 such trained personnel are working across the country. The course is now is the process of receiving government affiliation.

132. During 2009, under the auspices of the Jatiyo Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation (JPUF), the Government had piloted a program, under which five one-stop-service centers had been set up in different parts of the country, with adequate human resources to cater to different needs of people with disabilities living in remote rural areas, from where they generally cannot access quality services. The centers provide identification, counseling, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy services, along with distribution of a large number of assistive devices. Based on the success of this program, 10 more similar centers were set up the following year, and gradually this has been extended to 103 such centers covering all the 64 districts. Each center now has a corner to support children with Autism and NDDs. The plan is to gradually spread to all upazillas of the country in the future. Based on the learning of a national NGO who had been operating mobile service centers in different districts of the country through two buses and a launch, the Government has already taken initiative of mobilizing 32 Mobile Rehabilitation Van Service across the country in 64 districts such that people with disabilities living in far remote areas can also access required quality services.

133. The Government is planning to bring the rural people under therapeutic intervention through tele-therapy services by using modern IT communications facilities. A group of experts in the fields for example physiotherapists, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, psychologist will be engaged in this purpose to impart training in these areas to the community so that peripheral people with disabilities can avail these services within their reach.

134. Besides providing assistive devices free of cost, complicated surgeries are also offered to persons with different types of disabilities free of cost at the government hospitals and several private hospitals. Cochlear implants are being provided free of cost. Several hundred children with club feet and cleft lips and palates have gone through corrective surgeries also, free of cost.

135. The Government has set up an Autism Resource Center in the capital city of Dhaka, inaugurated by the Honorable Prime Minister. This centre has been providing education and counseling to the children with autism and their guardian since 2010. This center is gradually being enriched, and its services shall be extended to other districts of the country in the future. Within the purview of the lone medical university of the country, a large Center for Neuro-development and Autism in Children (CNAC) had also been founded. This has recently been upgraded into the Institute for Pediatric Neuro-disorders and Autism (IPNA), and is operating as a center of excellence in this area in Bangladesh. IPNA also offers telemedicine facilities.

136. A National Advisory Committee comprising of parents, professionals and government officials conducted a situation analysis on Neuro-developmental Disabilities and Autism for the first time in Bangladesh. The analysis called for needs to be addressed to develop the community in a comprehensive manner. An Inter-ministerial Steering Committee on autism and related disorders, comprising of eight Ministries (Social Welfare, Education, Finance, Health and Family welfare, Labor and Employment, Primary and Mass Education, Local Government and Rural Development and Women and Children Affairs) developed a strategic action plan that was formally presented to the President of Bangladesh in July 2012. The main objectives of the plan are to facilitate collaboration among the local stakeholders, experts and government officials in order to develop a comprehensive set of policies and standardized training programs for those working with persons with autism and neuro-developmental disabilities.

137. In 2010 the Ministry of Health launched a community health program in order to get medical services to the remote rural areas of the country. Community health workers are receiving training on developmental disabilities in order to implement early screening and intervention. With guidelines from WHO, a training manual on autism spectrum disorders and developmental disabilities was developed specifically for community health workers. Content from this manual has been incorporated into ongoing training modules. This is the first time that medical professionals are receiving any training on what is typically considered a non-medical issue in Bangladesh. In addition general practitioners and pediatricians are also being trained to conduct screenings for developmental delays.

138. In addition to the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013, considering the additional plight of people with Autism and other Neuro-developmental disabilities, the Neuro-developmental Disability Trust Act 2013 was enacted in November 2013. In pursuit of this Act, the National Neuro-developmental Disability Trust was founded earlier in 2014. BDT 200 million has been allocated in the National Budget of the current fiscal year for the initiation of this Trust. A further BDT 50 million has also been allocated to transform and upgrade the age old Education and Rehabilitation Center for the Physically Handicapped (ERCPH) into the National Trust for Persons with Physical Disabilities. The government has also planned to establish a state-of-the-art National Disability Complex within the premises of the JPUF at an initial cost of BDT 835 million, to provide social care services and hands-on economic opportunities for persons with disabilities.

139. In a recent move, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has issued a circular, under which the local government structure at the grassroots level is compelled to address the local needs of persons with disabilities. The local government authority has been instructed to collect and retain information and data regarding persons with disabilities, prioritize persons with disabilities in all local government schemes including the safetynet programs, ensure participation of persons with disabilities in all matters of the local government, allocate budget for development of persons with disabilities using a twin track approach, and raise awareness about disability, and the concerns of persons with disabilities at the local level. This will ensure addressing the diversity of challenges faced by persons with disabilities living in diverse geographical areas, including people living in hilly areas, coastal areas, offshore islands, flood prone and water-logged areas, drought-prone areas etc, besides the plain lands.

Article 27
Work and employment

140. Article 29 of the Constitution affirms, "(1) there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the Republic. (2) No citizen shall, on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office in the service of the Republic."

141. Earlier in the Constitution, Article 15 affirms (b) "the right to work that is the right to guaranteed employment at a reasonable wage having regard to the quantity and quality of work." Article 19 (Equality of opportunity) affirms, "(1) The State shall endeavor to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens. 2) The State shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality between man and man and to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens, and of opportunities in order to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic. (3)The State Shall endeavor to ensure equality of opportunity and participaion of women in all spheres of national life."

142. Article 20 affirms, "(1) Work is a right, a duty and a matter of honor for every citizen who is capable of working, and everyone shall be paid for his work on the basis of the principle "from each according to his abilities to each according to his work". (2) The State shall endeavor to create conditions in which, as a general principle, persons shall not be able to enjoy unearned incomes, and in which human labor in every form, intellectual and physical, shall become a fuller expression of creative endeavor and of the human personality."

143. Article 40 of the Constitution affirms, "Subject to any restrictions imposed by law, every citizen possessing such qualifications, if any, as may be prescribed by law in relation to his profession, occupation, trade or business shall have the right to enter upon any lawful profession or occupation, and to conduct any lawful trade or business."

144. Based on these Constitutional provisions, and in the spirit of the CRPD, the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 has established work and employment of persons with disabilities as their inalienable right. Article 16 (1) has three separate sub-articles towards this end, (i) "To gain employment in public and private institutions" (ii) "In

case of a person acquiring disability in the course of employment, to remain employed or receive appropriate rehabilitation and adequate compensation" and (m) "Receiving reasonable accommodation in education, work and all other applicable fields." Sub-article (k) "Protection from oppression and access to a secure and healthy environment" is applicable in this aspect. Jatio Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation organized disability development fair in 2014 and disability job fair in 2016. There is also job placement cell for the persons with disabilities based on referral mechanism under the joint GO-NGO collaboration at Jatio Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation.

145. Article 37 of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 affirms "(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law in force, a qualified person with disability shall not be deprived of or discriminated against in giving employment on account of his/her disability, depending on the nature of disability, provided he has the requisite qualifications." and "(2) If a question arises as to whether a person with a particular disability is qualified for a particular work, the National Coordination Committee shall provide instructions on the subject and such instruction shall be considered as final." Article 10 of the Schedules of the Act is also solely dedicated to employment of persons with disabilities.

146. The Government of Bangladesh had declared a 10% quota for all employments for orphans and people with disabilities, for all grades — 1st to 4th. The Government has also reserved 1% quota in the First Class cadre service jobs for the persons with disability. Accordingly, different ministries and departments of the Government have provided employment to people with disabilities, which include Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Ministry of Food, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Housing and Public Works, Ministry of Industries, Ministry of Labor and Employment, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunication and Information Technology, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Shipping and Inland Water Transport and Ministry of Youth and Sports in addition to the Ministry of Social Welfare.

147. The Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Technology has created various training opportunities for educated youths with disabilities, so that, they could pursue a better career. In recent years, under a joint GO-NGO collaborative effort, the ICT Division, Bangladesh Computer Council and an NGO are working together to ensure that the divisional level training centers offer ICT training opportunities to youths with disabilities. The centers have been made accessible, and the NGO is providing the required technical support relating to disability. In a similar effort, the Association of Cyber Cafe Owners have also agreed to install screen reading software on their computers, and they are also providing jobs (mostly to wheelchair users) in the members' café. The Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation has recently provided employment to 40 people with hearing and speech impairments in its central workshop.

148. The National Skills Development Council (NSDC) has developed an inclusive National Skill Development Policy (2011). With the support of ILO and the European Union, NSDC has also brought about a reform in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) program, declaring a Skill Vision 2016, to make it gender sensitive and also disability-friendly. As a result, besides the Government, a large number of private organizations have also successfully developed and implemented specific employment programs for persons with disabilities. So far 1,300 youths with disabilities have received hands-on training on IT, handicrafts, integrated agriculture, electrical and house wiring from the youth development centers across the country operated under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. 400 of them were young women with disabilities. Also, to promote technical education skills of persons with disabilities, a 5% quota has been created for them, by the Technical Education Board under the Ministry of Education, in enrolment into all public and private polytechnic institutions, and technical schools and colleges.

149. Considering that the Ready Made Garment industry is the topmost export earning sector of the country, employing millions of workers, the Sheikh Fazilatunnessa Training

Center has been built in the vicinity of the Export Promotion Zone in the outskirts of Dhaka City, to develop skilled machine operators and floor supervisors. The center has gradually been made disability-friendly by orienting the trainers on disability rights issues, and building accessibility features in the infrastructure. Following a recent health and safety audit, all services and facilities have been modified to make them inclusive of persons with disabilities.

150. In the private sector, formal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities are gradually on the rise. One business group alone, which began employing persons with disabilities about a decade back with only 10 people with hearing and speech impairment, today employs over 2,500 persons with disabilities. This has inspired others to follow suit. Besides cosmetic and readymade garment industries, persons with disabilities have also found employment in pharmaceutical industries, and in more technical jobs in banks and cell-phone companies. They are also working in call centers and outsourcing sectors.

151. In order to facilitate accommodation of working people with disability specially women the national disability foundation JPUF has built two hostels (one for women and one for men) within their premises, where such potential persons can find at least a temporary living arrangement free of cost and with subsidized food, until they can settle down in their jobs and find more suitable living arrangements. These hostels were inaugurated by the Honorable Prime Minister in 2010.

Article 28
Adequate standard of living and social protection

152. Article 15 of the Bangladesh Constitution affirms, "It shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to attain, through planned economic growth, a constant increase of productive forces and a steady improvement in the material and cultural standard of living of the people, with a view to securing to its citizens — (1) the provision of the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care; (2) the right to work, that is the right to guaranteed employment at a reasonable wage having regard to the quantity and quality of work; (3) the right to reasonable rest, recreation and leisure; and (4) the right to social security, that is to say to public assistance in cases of undeserved want arising from unemployment, illness or disablement, or suffered by widows or orphans or in old age, or in other such cases."

153. Considering the plight of poor people with disabilities, the Government of Bangladesh introduced a monthly allowance for people living in dire poverty across the country. The allowance now amounts to BDT 500, and currently 310,000 such people are under this safety net program. Under the newly proposed National Social Security Strategy (NSSS), this will increase to BDT 1,600 per month, and 1 million persons with disabilities (aged 1–59 years) will be catered in the next fiscal year, with a gradual increase in the number of recipients over the next few years. Those aged above 60 years will receive a pension amounting BDT 3,000 per month.

154. The government also sanctions grants and loans to NGOs for distributing among the people with disabilities. In the fiscal year 2015–2016, total grants BDT 82900000 and total loan BDT 87100000 were distributed among 470 and 969 beneficiary NGOs respectively.

155. The Government has also developed microfinance scheme, under which, people with disabilities who have acquired some level of training, can have access to an interest-free loan up to an amount of BDT 25,000 to start a small income generating program. The loan needs to be repaid in 10 easy installments over a period of three years. Also similar schemes have been patronized by four Government operated nationalized banks, where larger amounts are also accessible to people with disabilities in the form of group loans.

156. Recognizing that a large section of the community, especially in the dry land areas in the northern districts of the country, suffer from unemployment problems, the Government has introduced a fixed 100 days per year jobs for unemployed adults. People with disabilities are given a higher priority in the selection of the candidates for this scheme.

Article 29
Participation in political and public life

157. Article 11 of the Constitution of Bangladesh affirms "The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed, and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured." Article 37 affirms "Every citizen shall have the right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of public order or public health." And Article 38 mentions "Every citizen shall have the right to form associations or unions, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of morality or public order."

158. Vide these three articles, persons with disabilities are constitutionally protected and empowered to assemble, form associations, and participate in any (legally tenable) electoral process. The confusion often occurs, however, where persons with intellectual disabilities or psychosocial disabilities are involved. According to Article 122, which deals with qualifications for registration as voter, a person could not be deterred from registration as a voter if he "(2)(c) does not stand declared by a competent court to be of unsound mind." Therefore, unless an adult Bangladeshi citizen is barred by a competent court, there should be no bar to register him/her as a voter.

159. Following the ratification of the CRPD, for the first time in the history of the country, a program had been initiated to provide a National Identity Card and Voter ID Card to all citizens aged 18 years and above. Persons with disabilities across the country had also been counted; and special disability specific information had been gathered and entered into the national database. As such, special arrangements had been attempted across the country in a planned effort during the National Parliamentary Elections in December 2008 to ensure that people with disabilities could exercise their right to vote, facing least possible inaccessibility hindrances, and maintaining their secrecy.

160. The Representation of the Peoples' Order (RPO) and the Conduction of Election Rules had been adapted accordingly, to accommodate such processes. The practice was followed in the national and local elections in 2014 and 2015. The Government is now planning e-voting measures, such that, voters with disabilities can exercise this right in future with far more convenience. Moreover, under the auspices of the National Election Commission, over 450 server stations for electoral database have been constructed across the country, each of which has accessibility options in-built in their designs.

161. Adequately qualified people with disabilities have been contesting in different elections, especially of the Local Government on a regular basis.

162. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 has duly recognized this vide Article 16 (1) (t) "Receiving national identification card, be included in the voter list, cast votes and participate in elections" as a right. The law also affirms in (s) "Establishing and governing self-help organizations and welfare clubs and organizations" as a right. The provisions have been elaborated in Article 16 (Organization) of the Schedules of the Act.

Article 30
Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

163. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 has recognized vide Article 16 (1) (p) "Participate in cultural, recreational, tourism, leisure and sports activities" a right for persons with disabilities. Article 14 (Sports, Cultural Activities and Recreation) of the Schedules of the Act describes the provisions in further details.

164. Open-to-all cultural events and popular theater shows performed by people with disabilities are organized across the country at every given opportunity. The Prime Minister

of Bangladesh herself has attended several programs organized and performed by persons with disabilities, which have been telecast live on television channels.

165. National arts and crafts exhibitions, national disability fairs and festivals have been organized in the country to highlight and showcase the creative, artistic and cultural skills and talents of persons with disabilities.

166. The State-operated cultural centre, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, has also hosted national cultural meets performed by people with disabilities. Measures are now being taken so that exceptional performers with disabilities could be sent on overseas tours to promote our national culture and heritage, or that they can pursue better training or education on such fields, patronized by the Government.

167. Bangladeshi children with disabilities, especially those with intellectual disabilities, have historically excelled in sports meets both within the country and abroad. The successive successes in the Special Olympics have attracted large corporate groups for support and sponsorships, for adequate training of such athletes and effective participation in the Special Olympics events. A national Blind Cricket team also participated at the Blind Cricket World Cups at Bangalore, India in 2012 and in Cape Town, South Africa in 2014. The Government is also now allocating special funds in the annual national budgets to promote sports and games opportunities for persons with disabilities, especially the children.

168. Under a direct patronization of the Prime Minister, a National Disability Sports Complex is being built in the outskirts of the capital city for promotion of sports and games for children with disabilities.

169. The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism is also developing accessibility options in hotels, motels and prominent tourist spots. Some motels operated by the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (national tourism institution) offers discounts to persons with disabilities on room tariff. Some of their hotels have also provided employment to violinists and pianists with disabilities as regular performers in their hotel lobby.

Part C
Segment relevant to the specific situation of Boys, Girls and Women with Disabilities

Article 6
Women with disabilities

170. While the Constitution of Bangladesh repeatedly calls for equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of gender (in addition to some other grounds), it specifically addresses the issue of women in Article 19 (3) where it states, "The State shall endeavor to ensure equality of opportunity and participation of women in all spheres of national life", in Article 28 (2) "Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life", and Article 28 (4) "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provision in favor of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens."

171. The National Women Development Policy 2008 has been updated in 2011. The 2008 Policy, for the first time categorized women with disabilities as especially vulnerable women in Bangladesh, under its Chapter — 3 Paragraph 16. The paragraph mandates that programs should be addressed for especially vulnerable women, including women with disabilities, considering their diversity of position and needs to provide them with special facilities. The 2011 Policy once again puts further stress on women with disabilities. In its list of objectives (Article 16) a specific objective was set for establishing the rights and promoting development of women with disabilities (Article 16.17). Moreover, a stand-alone section (Article 39) has been dedicated to the rights and development of women with disabilities, following the content and spirit of the CRPD.

172. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 gives equal status to men and women with disabilities in all its provisions. However, to ensure that the voices

of women are heard, specific seats have been reserved for them in all the committees (from national coordination to grassroots level) enshrined with the responsibilities to oversee the implementation of the law.

Article 7
Children with disabilities

173. A group of children with disabilities from Bangladesh had directly and actively participated in the drafting process of the CRPD held at the United Nations Headquarters. Two Bangladeshi children with disability formed part of a six-member team to take part in the 7th Session of the Ad Hoc Committee. Earlier, children with different types and grades of disabilities worked together to develop the recommendations, which was later carried forward by the two representatives from Bangladesh at the global negotiations. After the ratification of CRPD by the Government of Bangladesh, those children were engaged in the national process, too.

174. The Government of Bangladesh has adopted National Children Policy in 2011. The Policy has provided for a two-pronged approach concerning children with disabilities. Firstly, the entire Policy has been framed ensuring non-discrimination on any grounds whatsoever. Secondly, recognizing the vicious cycle between poverty and disability, a special section on children with disabilities (Article 6.8), based on the principles of the CRPD have been incorporated, and additional proactive programs have been targeted so that the children with disabilities can grow up with other non-disabled children in an equitable manner. Considering that children with autism face even greater challenges, a separate section (Article 6.9) has also been added to the Children Policy, giving special emphasis on their education, overall development, and special provisions during disasters.

175. The Children's Act 2013, applicable for protecting the rights of all children without any discrimination whatsoever, has made specific reference to children with disabilities in two places, in Article 89 (1), in a list of underprivileged children; and in Article 19 (3) permitting special seating arrangements in the juvenile court, if the child requires so due to disability. Article 89 (2) empowers the government to adopt special provisions to cater the needs of underprivileged children, to be prescribed by the Rules of this law. Drafting of the Rule under this Act is under process.

176. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 has called for specific measures for the rights and fundamental freedoms of children with disabilities in line with the principles and contents of the CRPD.

Part D
Segment relevant to the specific obligations

Article 31
Statistics and data collection

177. The 5th National Census conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) under the Ministry of Planning in 2011 was the first of its kind to include people with disability in the enumeration. The 2011 census included the people with impairment mostly. The census result showed a national prevalence rate of only 1.4%, presumably due to the partial implementation.[1] Mentionable, according to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, conducted by the Bureau of Statistics in 2010, the prevalence was recorded 9.07%.

178. Beyond the BBS, the Government is also trying to elicit information through the Local Government using the nation-wide birth registration process. Primary Schools are also entrusted with the responsibility of identifying children with disabilities within their respective catchments areas. The Department of Social Services under Ministry of Social

[1] A 2011 World Bank case study on disabilities in Bangladesh estimated that 16.2% of working age people had some kind of disability.

Welfare has been implementing nationwide disability survey with the assistance of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and JPUF. Doctors and 103 Consultants (Physiotherapy) participated to conduct the survey of 1,333,337 PWDs so far. A comprehensive database will be prepared on the basis of the findings of the survey. This survey will help the Government undertake and implement suitable programs and projects for development of PWDs, people with ASD and other NDDs. The list is given below:

1.	Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorders	38 678
2.	Physical Disability	590 448
3.	Mental Illness Leading to Disability	45 392
4.	Visual Disability	184 201
5.	Speech Disability	97 116
6.	Intellectual Disability	103 911
7.	Hearing Disability	37 779
8.	Deaf-Blindness	5 491
9.	Cerebral Palsy	58 718
10.	Down Syndrome	2 414
11.	Multiple Disability	169 189
12.	Other Disability	00
	Total	**1 333 337**

179. Most recently, the Department of Social Services, through its field level workers spread across the country deep into the Union level, are also identifying persons with disabilities, especially those living in abject poverty, for better accessing the safety-nets services they offer. Following the same process that the National Election Commission had followed for the Voter ID cards, the DSS workers visited every household with a prescribed form to collect primary information. After this survey was completed, identified persons with disabilities have been asked to appear at identification centers, where qualified and trained medical doctors and rehabilitation workers have assessed the cases, arrived at detailed classifications, and taken photographs for the National Disability Cards. So far National Disability Cards have been distributed among about 950000 numbers of people.

180. The Department of Social Services of Bangladesh under the Disability Detection Survey Program of the Ministry of Social Welfare has developed a database www.dis.gov.bd that stores information about 12 types of disability. At present the number of people registered in the database is 1,509,716 (as of 31 December 2016). Any person with disabilities can register to this database and after registration the type and degree of disability is detected and confirmed by medical doctors and certified physiotherapists. The information stored in the database can be utilized further for providing need based assistance to these vulnerable people so that they can effectively contribute to the society and be included in the mainstream of development.

Article 32
International Cooperation

181. The Government of Bangladesh recognizes that it would be impossible on the part of it alone to cover all the costs for development of all people with disabilities, even in the long run. What is required is an inclusive development atmosphere, where all citizens, including people with disabilities can benefit from development programs. Therefore, the Government has adopted a twin-track approach. On one hand, all the development programs are made inclusive of persons with disabilities. On the other hand, it is enhancing its programs specifically targeted to people with disabilities. Under the first scheme, the national poverty reduction strategies and the Sixth Five Year Plan have been made adequately inclusive of persons with disabilities and their concerns. So any assistance coming in into these programs, are automatically addressing, and in many cases,

prioritizing persons with disabilities. At the same time, the Government has received a support from the World Bank for a large five-year project, amounting about USD 22 million specifically for people with disabilities.

182. The Government is also opening up scopes for Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) specifically focusing disability issues, which not only will benefit people with disabilities, but also will create job opportunities for them in large numbers.

183. In order to bring greater focus on the needs of children autism and mental health issues, the government has partnered with 'Autism Speaks' and the 'World Health Organization' and launched the Global Autism Public Health Initiative (GAPH). In 2011, the Government of Bangladesh hosted a landmark International Conference on Autism in Dhaka. The conference of about 1,000 participants from 11 countries was hugely enriched by the presence of regional dignitaries including Sonia Gandhi, the Chairperson of the then Indian Ruling Alliance, Shiranthi Wickramasingha Rajapaksa, the first lady of Sri Lanka, Ilham Hussain, lady wife of Vice-President of Maldives, Health Ministers from Indonesia and Bhutan and officials from various countries working in autism and health sector. The seven-point Dhaka Declaration adopted at the Conference is a ray of hope for people with neuro-development disorders. The Declaration calls for promoting stronger coordinated action regionally and globally to improve access to and obtain quality health care services for people with autism and other neuro-developmental disorders and disabilities. Another outcome of the Conference was the launching of the Southeast Asia Autism Network (SAAN).

184. In September 2012, the Government of Bangladesh introduced a resolution on autism at the 65th annual meeting of WHO-SEARO. Adopted unanimously, this resolution led to the first high-level meeting of Ministers for the South Asia Autism Network (SAAN), in February 2013 in New Delhi. Organized by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, India, the meeting was attended by the Ministries of Health from Nepal, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, Bangladesh and India, and nearly 500 experts from the region. The meeting adopted the Delhi Pledge for SAAN as its outcome document. The meeting afforded government officials and policy-makers, as well as local and international autism content experts and stakeholders, to share their strategic and identify partnership and development opportunities among countries across the region.

185. With the goal of enhancing support for individuals, families and communities affected by ASD worldwide, the government of Bangladesh tabled a new UN resolution titled, 'Addressing the Socio-economic Needs of Individuals, Families and Societies living with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Developmental Disabilities'(A/RES/67/82) [UN Resolution]. With the support of seventy-one co-sponsors, the resolution was unanimously adopted on 12 December 2012. The resolution called upon member states to enhance service, increase public and professional awareness on ASD, build research expertise, and promote inclusive education and the full participation of individuals with autism and developmental disabilities in all facets of society. The recommendations highlighted in the resolution serve as a road map for member states, in addition to international non-governmental and UN agencies, looking to promote the rights and improve the lives of individuals affected by autism.

186. In addition to the UN adoption, the resolution for 'Comprehensive and Coordinated Efforts for the Management of ASDs', introduced by Bangladesh and co-sponsored by fifty-three countries, was adopted by the Executive Board of WHO in May 2013. This was formally placed and adopted at the Sixty-Eighth World Health Assembly in 2014. The resolution encourages the implementation of the Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020 and the WHA 66.9 resolution on disability to scale up care for individuals with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disorders, as applicable, and as an integrated component of the scale-up of care for all mental health needs. These international cooperative efforts earned Ms. Saima Wazed Hossain, the Chair of the National Advisory Committee on Autism, the 'WHO Excellence Award'. The WHO Director General Margaret Chan, considering her "technical ability, experience, global representation in terms of diversity of knowledge, and approaches in the relevant field" made her an expert of her advisory panel on mental health.

Article 33
National Implementation and Monitoring

187. Immediately after the ratification of the CRPD, the then Head of the Government of Bangladesh convened a meeting at his office, expressing that it had now become a high priority of the Government to ensure rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities of the country. All ministries and departments of the Government were instructed to assign a focal person and necessary actions were taken immediately. Over the last few years, this process has progressed strongly, and now as many as 46 Ministries and Departments not only have a focal person from amongst the second/third highest tier of the bureaucracy, but all such focal points are now assisted by a disability desk and required staff to attend to the issues. A highly coordinated process had been taken to adequately inform such focal persons of their tasks at hand, and a thorough understanding of the CRPD.

188. Soon after the formation of the democratically elected government in January 2009, the new Government, under the supervision and chairmanship of the Secretary of the Ministry of Social Welfare constituted an inter-ministerial National Monitoring Committee to oversee and advise all concerned on the effective and actual implementation of the CRPD. The Committee, which is inclusive of representatives of persons with disabilities and their national organizations and the National Human Rights Commission, continues to sit regularly on a quarterly basis, and has taken the responsibility of writing this report.

The Government is now also allocating finances in the national budgets, following the National Action Plan on disability. Emerging issues, especially after the ratification of the CRPD, have also been included in the national budgets, beyond the National Action Plan. The government, in its 7th five-year plan, has taken a disability-inclusive comprehensive development approach. The National Action Plan on Disability 2012–2020 is also undergoing implementation and the Government hopes to update the Plan on the basis of need and make allocations for its adequate implementation.